



For Immediate Release:

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Fire Up the Barbeque and Enjoy Memorial Day Weekend!

Memorial Day Cookouts: Tips from Public Health on Food and Water Safety

LOS ANGELES - As Memorial Day approaches, many Southern Californians will be gathering with family and friends to enjoy the long weekend playing at the beach, camping, or barbequing in the backyard. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health is offering several tips to help everyone enjoy their holiday weekend free of food-borne illnesses, water-related illnesses, sunburn, or accidents.

Food Safety Tips

"Cooks should only have to worry about whether there's enough food on the table for a gathering and not whether the food will make people sick. If the dishes are not properly prepared or cooked, food can contain bacteria and other infectious agents that could cause food poisoning," said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. "Simple food safety precautions such as washing your hands before and after handling raw food and maintaining correct temperatures during and after cooking will ensure your guests walk away with great memories of a good meal instead of a nasty illness."

Some common symptoms that may be caused by food-borne illness include diarrhea, abdominal cramps, vomiting, dehydration, and fever. Most of these types of illnesses are caused by three problems: allowing "cold" foods, like potato salad, to get warm or "hot" foods, like casseroles or meatballs, to get to room temperature; handling food with contaminated hands; and not cooking foods such as meat or chicken thoroughly.

Before you barbeque or prepare food:

- Always wash your hands with warm water and soap before and after handling any food, especially raw meat, poultry, or seafood.
- When marinating for long periods of time, it is important to keep foods refrigerated. Don't use sauce that was used to marinate raw meat or poultry on cooked food.
- Keep raw foods, especially meat, poultry, or seafood, away from cooked foods. Do not use the same plate, tray, cutting board or utensils for raw and cooked foods.
- Keep meats, salads, and other perishable foods in the refrigerator until you are ready to use them. If you store your food in a cooler, keep the temperature at or below 40° F (4° C), and keep the lid closed as much as possible. Pack plenty of extra ice or freezer packs to insure a constant cold temperature. Store your cooler in the shade, away from birds and animals.
- Barbeques should be pre-heated before cooking. When using a charcoal grill, preheat the coals on your grill for 20 to 30 minutes, or until the coals are lightly coated with ash.
- Thoroughly wash fruits and vegetables, such as cantaloupe and watermelon, before consumption or cooking.

During cooking:

- Always check the temperature of the food before you stop cooking. Use a food thermometer to make sure food has reached a safe internal temperature. Additionally, the U.S. Department



of Agriculture (USDA) recommends all cooked meats and poultry rest for three minutes before cutting to ensure optimum safety and quality.

- Beef, veal, lamb steaks, roasts: at least 145° F (63° C).
- Ground beef (hamburgers), ground pork: 160° F (71° C).
- All poultry, including ground meats: 165° F (74° C).
- Fish: 145° F (63° C); should be opaque and flake easily with a fork.
- Shrimp, lobster, crabs: 145 °F (62.8 °C); meat should be pearly and opaque.
- Clams, oysters, mussels: shells should be open when cooked. Discard shells that remain closed after cooking.

After cooking:

- Put cooked food on a clean plate or tray.
- Large batches of food that are prepared the day before, such as beans and potato salad, should be placed in shallow containers to quickly cool to 40° F (4° C) in the refrigerator.
- Don't use leftover marinade or sauce from the raw food on the cooked food.
- Keep all food covered to prevent cross contamination and to avoid attracting flies.
- Eat food as soon as it is ready.
- Leftovers should be placed in shallow containers, and refrigerated. Food may be covered when cool.
- Leftovers should be reheated to 165° F (74° C) before eating.
- Eat leftovers within two days.

For more information on food safety, check out <http://www.foodsafety.gov/>.

For information on food safety at fairs and festivals, visit www.cdc.gov/features/fairsandfood.

Recreational Water Safety Tips

This year's National Recreational Water Illness and Injury (RWII) Prevention Week is May 20-26, 2013. In support of RWII week, "we want to encourage people to enjoy the great beaches, lakes, water parks, and swimming pools that Los Angeles County has to offer in the healthiest way possible," said Dr. Fielding. "That means taking precautions to ensure that you, your friends and family don't get sick from germs in lakes and the ocean. Don't swallow water while swimming or playing; do shower before entering a pool or spa, and practice good hygiene when visiting public swimming pools."

Recreational water illnesses (RWI) are caused by swallowing water in pools, spas, oceans, lakes, or rivers. Diarrheal illnesses are most commonly reported and may be due to parasites and bacteria such as *Cryptosporidium*, *Giardia*, or *E. coli* O157. Swimmers who ingest contaminated water could experience severe symptoms such as diarrhea, or milder symptoms such as bloating, cramping, and nausea.

Accurate statistics on the number of cases of water-borne illness in Los Angeles County are not available because RWI often goes unreported or is misdiagnosed. Nationwide, there were 134 waterborne disease outbreaks associated with recreational water that were reported between 2007 and 2008, the most recent period for which there is published data, according to the CDC. Those 134 outbreaks left 13,966 individuals sickened. Swimmers and other recreational water users consider the following precautions when enjoying beaches, water parks, pools, or other venues:



- People should routinely and carefully disinfect their pools or spas using chlorine or an equivalent product. They should also use a filter to screen out solids.
- Swimmers, including children, who have diarrhea should never enter public water areas.
- Toddlers should use swim diapers and the diaper should be checked often. If it needs to be changed, this should be done in the restroom and not near the water.
- Swimmers should wash their hands after using the toilet, and after changing a child's diaper.
- Swimmers, including children, should practice good hygiene by showering before entering the water.
- Children should be taught to not swallow water either in swimming pools, in the ocean or in a lake.

Children ages one to nine years of age are particularly vulnerable to infection as they tend to swallow water indiscriminately. Pregnant women and those with compromised immune systems are also at greater risk.

Drowning Prevention:

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), drowning is the leading cause of injury death for children age 1-14. For each child drowning fatality, five more children suffer a near-drowning incident requiring emergency department care, which could result in severe, permanent brain damage. These incidents can be prevented through:

- Active supervision; watch children at all times. Do not be distracted by conversations, reading, or napping.
- Installing fences with self-closing and self-latching gates around pools and spas. California's Swimming Pool Safety Act requires approved safety barriers around all pools and spas built after January 1, 1998 and any pools being remodeled.
- Learning cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- Enrolling children in swim lessons.

Avoid Sun Damage:

- Stay in the shade whenever possible, but especially between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.
- Avoid tanning and UV tanning booths.
- Use a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 and UVA and UVB protection. Reapply often, especially after going into the water or excessive sweating.
- Keep newborns out of the sun. Sunscreen may be used on babies six months and older.

Inspection reports for public swimming pools in Los Angeles County and information on beach conditions are available online at http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh/EP/rw/rw_main.htm. Recorded information on beach conditions is available by calling (800) 525-5662.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do please visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov, visit our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/lapublichealth, find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/lapublichealth, or follow us on Twitter: @LAPublicHealth.